

GEORGE H. BRIMHALL BUILDING REDEDICATION

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BYU Campus, Provo, Utah
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Brothers and sisters, I am grateful to represent President Gordon B. Hinckley and the Church Board of Education, as well as the Brimhall family, in rededicating this beautifully renovated Brimhall Building.

George H. Brimhall served as president of BYU from 1904–1921 and as President Emeritus from 1921 until his death in 1932. In those difficult depression years, the Board of Education had to make many, many decisions, but one specific decision was what to do with the old Mechanical Arts Building, which stood right here. President Harris reported of the Board meeting where this decision was made,

We sat there having in mind the alternatives of building a temporary structure or erecting something permanent. The President [of the Board (who was also President of the Church, Heber J. Grant)], in the dignity of his office, after hearing everything, very quietly said, “I vote for making it a good building. The pioneers laid the foundation by doing things well. It is time we were doing likewise.” (Honoring Dr. George H. Brimhall: Remarks by President F. S. Harris, 9)

After making the approved additions, this building was originally dedicated and named the George H. Brimhall building, by President Heber J. Grant 70 years ago, in 1935.

This building has been remodeled and added to several times. Each renovation, including this latest one, has been true to President Grant’s original decision: “I vote for making it a good building.” I think as you go around and observe you will find it is a good building.

I am indebted to Mary Jane Woodger and my brother Joseph for some of the information and for several of the quotes I will use.

How fitting that the Communications Department of BYU is gathered together in this building named after a master communicator.

One of the oft-quoted illustrations of President Brimhall’s extraordinary communication skills was when a student reported that his watch had been stolen. President Brimhall called the students together, told them of the missing watch, then said, “Whoever took it will hear in every tick, every day, the clock saying, ‘thief, thief, thief, thief.’” He then said his office would be open the next morning, but he would not be there, so whoever took the watch could put it back on his

desk anonymously. The story goes that he returned to his office later in the day and found not one but four watches! To me, this represents good communication—clear, concise, effective, helpful, and truthful.

The spirit of George H. Brimhall has and will permeate the walls of this and other buildings and the university in general—but specifically this building. As President Grant pleaded in his original dedicatory prayer 70 years ago (I'll just read part), "We pray that the teachings in this building may be under the inspiration of thy Spirit. That every influence that is contrary to faith, humility, virtue, and uprightness, may be banished from this building" (Honoring Dr. George H. Brimhall: Remarks by President F. S. Harris, 20).

I think it has happened, I think it will continue to happen, and I appreciate the members of the Communications Department and their students, following and reinforcing that admonition from President Grant and President Brimhall.

What is the spirit exemplified by President Brimhall? Let me mention just a few qualities he possessed that we could all learn from.

First: Loyalty.

President Brimhall was loyal to the Lord, to the Church, to his family, and to his leaders. President Franklin Harris once said of him,

I can say that in my acquaintance with men I have never known one who has been truer to principle, who has been more faithful to duty as he saw it, one who was more willing to put himself in the background, and to follow the advice of his leaders. When his brethren spoke, there was no question. His personal opinion was absolutely secondary and the will of the Board of Trustees and the Authorities of the Church was the only thing that mattered. (Honoring Dr. George H. Brimhall: Remarks by President F. S. Harris, 10)

Brimhall often spoke to students about Church loyalty. He felt devotion to the Church should be their natural inclination. He often said:

You have been the guests of the Church, and you have also been the guests of the Board. I hope none of you will assume to be host or hostess. I did not create this university; you did not create it. I have not maintained it; you have not maintained it. I am an employee. You are students. And shall the employees presume to instruct the employer and tell him how his business should be run? Is it good taste on the part of the guest to indicate how the banquet shall be served?

Let us be Loyal! Loyal to the royal that is in us.

Second: Great Faith.

George H. Brimhall had faith in God. He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His church, and in the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. He loved the Prophet Joseph Smith, as the song we have heard expresses. This poem, believed to have been written while he was serving a mission in Colorado, speaks of George's deep yet humble faith.

A Missionary's Prayer

The night was dark, the forest dense;
No shelter and no path led hence.
A youth, whose home was far away,
Was lost. What could he do or say?

He knelt beside a fallen tree
And prayed, "O, God, I call to Thee!
Father, I've done my very best—
I leave to Thee, O Lord, the rest!"

He rose and turned, when lo! A light
Came through the trees—most welcome sight!
Guided by the flickering flame
He found a hut, announced his name,

"Come in," the cheery woodsman said,
"Tis late, I would have been in bed
But baby cried, and I got out
To see what baby fussed about."

What had that missionary's prayer
To do with waking baby there?
God heard it, used the infant call
In answer to it, that was all.

God might have sent an angel bright,
To guide the lost one on that night;
He chose to prove his loving care
By simpler means, Yet God was there.

Unwise the one who never prays
Because God moves in nature's ways;
For after man has done his best
He'll still need God to do the rest.

Let us all have deeper Faith!

Third: Ability.

George H. Brimhall chose to be a teacher, and he wanted to be a good teacher. Using the Savior as an example, he said,

Teaching was the vocation of the Master. The teacher's work—creative. In the beginning the earth was without form and void; so is the world to the child. The teacher is to make the world for the child, by leading him to discover. The preparation of the material was spiritual. All things [were] created first spiritual then temporal. Man imitates God in preparing and planning [and teaching].

Brimhall felt that one of the most important characteristics of a teacher is sympathy. “What an awful thing it is,” he said, “when you come to think of it, to allow any young person in our charge to lose heart . . . when almost the only really helpful thing we are able to give, is an uplift!” And he uplifted all who came in contact with him.

He worked hard and became a superb teacher, speaker, and poet. Literally thousands of students were touched by his example. James E. Talmage, Ezra Taft Benson, and many others expressed deep appreciation for his positive influence on them.

Students and faculty today can feel that influence by reading some of his writings which can be found in the bound volumes in the back of this room (#140), in the area called the Brimhall Gallery. There are several books containing the writings of George H. Brimhall, compiled by family members and others. These are available for study, use, including copying, by any interested person, but should remain in this room.

In the October 1994 General Conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley quoted the following story, which is an example of someone being touched by President Brimhall. This young man later became a coach here at BYU.

Several years ago when Provo City was scarred with unsightly saloons and other questionable forms of amusement, I was standing one evening on the street, waiting for my gang to show up, when I noticed that the [Provo] tabernacle was lighted up and a large crowd was moving in that direction. I had nothing to do so I drifted over there and went in. I thought I might find some of my gang, or at least some of the girls that I was interested in. Upon entering, I ran across three or four of the fellows and we placed ourselves under the gallery where there was a crowd of young ladies, who seemed to promise entertainment. We were not interested in what came from the pulpit. We knew that the people on the rostrum were all old fogies. They didn't know anything about life, and they certainly couldn't tell us anything [Things haven't changed much, have they?], for we knew it all. So we

settled down to have a good time. Right in the midst of our disturbance there thundered from the pulpit the following statement:

“You can’t tell the character of an individual by the way he does his daily work. Watch him when his work is done. See where he goes. Note the companions he seeks, and the things he does when he may do as he pleases. Then you can tell his true character.”

I looked up toward the rostrum because I was struck with this powerful statement. I saw there a slim, dark-haired man. [The speaker] went on to make a comparison. He said: “Let us take the eagle, for example. This bird works as hard and as efficiently as any other animal or bird in doing its daily work. It provides for itself and its young by the sweat of its brow, so to speak; but when its daily work is over and the eagle has time of its own to do just as it pleases, note how it spends its recreational moments. It flies in the highest realms of heaven, spreads its wings and bathes in the upper air, for it loves the pure, clean atmosphere and the lofty heights.

“On the other hand, let us consider the hog. This animal grunts and grubs and provides for its young just as well as the eagle; but when its working hours are over and it has some recreational moments, observe where it goes and what it does. The hog will seek out the muddiest hole in the pasture and will roll and soak itself in filth, for this is the thing it loves. People can be either eagles or hogs in their leisure time.”

When I heard this short speech, I was dumbfounded [This is the young man speaking]. I turned to my companions abashed for I was ashamed to be caught listening. What was my surprise to find everyone of the gang with his attention fixed upon the speaker and his eyes containing a far-away expression.

We went out of the tabernacle that evening rather quiet and separated from each other unusually early. . . . That night there was implanted within me the faintest beginnings of ambition to lift myself out of the hog group and to rise to that of the eagle. . . .

There was instilled within me that same evening, the urge to help fill up the mud holes in the social pasture so that those people with hog tendencies would find it difficult to wallow in recreational filth. As a result of constant thinking about that speech, I was stirred to devote my whole life and my profession toward developing wholesome recreational activities for the young people, so that it would be natural and easy for them to indulge in the eagle-type of leisure.

The man who made that speech, which affected my life more than any other speech I ever heard, was President George H. Brimhall. May God bless him! (Raymond Brimhall Holbrook and Esther Hamilton Holbrook, *The Tall Pine Tree*, n.p., 1988, pp. 111–13)

President Hinckley's father, Bryant S. Hinckley, said of George Brimhall, he possessed "an intangible something that leaps from soul to soul like electricity from a dynamo."

President Heber J. Grant said of President Brimhall, "He was a man of great ability, a man of remarkable inspiration when preaching the gospel. He was a man who very seldom repeated himself—I wish that I had some of that ability" [President Grant, was often accused of telling the same story over and over.] (Honoring Dr. George H. Brimhall: Remarks by President F. S. Harris, 14)

Let us develop more ability.

Fourth: Vision.

George H. Brimhall's vision of the future of BYU was a driving force in his life. He believed that the Church's mission was larger than the school's mission. He believed that it was only as an arm of the Church that the school was destined to achieve greatness. Although there were times during his administration when, due to financial problems, board members and others suggested that BYU be closed, moved, or turned over to the state, Brimhall was confident that because of its Church connection the institution would survive and prosper.

Remember that President Brimhall lived in a day when the place of higher education was not as clearly defined as it is today. During his tenure, many controversies arose over lots of issues, such as money, the future of the school, academic freedom, the role of the Church and even the question of the value of education in an era when the need to work hard for mere survival was so pressing. Many times President Brimhall would go to his faculty and not only tell them that they weren't getting a raise, but they weren't getting anything—would you still stay and teach? They did, and he did.

The whole concept of this upper campus, Temple Hill, and, even more fundamental, of a university sponsored totally by the Church, were causes that he steadily and throughout his life championed. Brimhall asked students to support the effort to acquire Temple Hill—this area, this upper campus—by giving up their pleasure money. For three weeks students went without candy, gum, shows or dances and raised \$1,049 to help purchase this land that we are on. He had

lots of faith and lots of vision. Many others have built on this vision and look what we have now! Small threads of vision, with faith, can become strong chords.

President Brimhall believed in training teachers. His ambition was to make BYU a place from which Latter-day Saint teachers would go forth to influence the destiny of Utah, the United States, and the entire Kingdom of God over all the world. He understood well the balance between secular and spiritual education, and his vision continues to be fulfilled today. His concept of teachers, of course, is now broadened to include teachers and exemplars in business, science, art and many other areas. He once said:

We have not only to supply the immediate and growing demands for teachers, but we have also great educational problems to work out in the light of the Gospel, problems which can not be solved in educational institutions where the field of revelation is either forbidden ground, or looked upon as unprofitable. We must bring to the world a harmony between science and religion, and to do this we must be in possession of both.

What vision!

Above all, Brimhall wanted religious education to permeate every aspect of the BYU experience. He informed faculty and students,

Every department in our great school contributes to the department of religious education. The job of the religious education department as a specific unit is merely to crystallize all that is given elsewhere; to turn the stream of knowledge accruing in each class into the pulsating living flood of human interest . . . which we call vitalized religion.

Great vision!

He was forward looking in many other areas. For example:

- He believed in teaching parents and was pleased to announce that, as far as he was aware, “The Latter-day Saints are the first people in the world . . . to make the theory of parenthood a part of their higher education.”
- He believed, “The lower the grade the better the teacher needed.”
- Well ahead of his time, he declared, “It is piracy to pay a woman less than a man gets for the same work.”
- Brimhall grasped the concept of alternative education by proclaiming, “Educate all the people all of the time, not just some of the people some of the time. School should be open six nights as well as six days.”

Let us all grasp the vision we are entitled to, and live for its fulfillment.

I am grateful for the good life of George H. Brimhall. I am grateful for your good lives. It is the good lives of people all over the world in all ages that has kept and continues to keep this earth going, and protects it from being “utterly wasted”—not only at the Lord’s final coming, but each and every day of its existence.

The scriptures tell us of many peoples and places being spared for the “sake of the righteous among them.” [See Alma 10:22-23, for an example.] Have you ever wondered how valuable a good life is? Consider with me the situation of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham received a promise from the Lord to spare the cities if but 10 righteous souls could be found. The angels looked but could not find 10, only Lot and some of his family. To the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, at that time, what would have been the value of just a few more righteous souls?

None of us fully know how many destroying angels are diverted and how much destruction avoided because of the lives of good people around us. On the other hand, we do not fully understand the magnitude of the blessings we receive because of the righteous lives of those among us. In my opinion, the greatest gift we can give to the Lord, ourselves, and our families, and our communities is a life of goodness—a desire and a willingness to help others. I submit that one such life of goodness is that of George H. Brimhall.

Many will say, “But there is another side to his life.” I ask: Did he make mistakes? Yes. Welcome to humanity. Did he have weaknesses? Yes, welcome again. Did he keep going? Yes. Did he show courage, vision and desire to do the Lord’s will? Yes, yes, and yes!

The Lord knows our weaknesses and understands our need for constant help. Thus, He gives us the privilege of daily prayer, weekly renewal of covenants in sacrament meeting, and constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. No human life can equal the Savior’s “. . . who went about doing good.” [Acts 10:38] Many mortal lives have moved along that path—some farther than others. May we all constantly move in that direction!

President Brimhall’s life was one of accomplishment. Every life that accomplishes anything is filled with controversy and contradiction. We all know the feeling: Sometimes we are kind; other times we’re angry. Sometimes we are generous and helpful and other times, selfish and hurtful. I can all but hear Nephi lamenting, “O wretched man that I am” [2 Nephi 4:17], or

Paul saying, “For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do” [Romans 7:19]. But I can also hear them saying “But I know in whom I have trusted.”

Thank goodness for repentance. Thank goodness that God sees the whole picture. As humans we see only snatches and segments, but God sees and comprehends it all. As humans we tend to focus on certain aspects of a person’s life—and usually we see what we focus on. God focuses on the total person—his or her whole life. This mortal sphere is but a small, albeit vital, part. God focuses on our unlimited potential! That’s why the Savior suffered and died for all of us, leaving no one out.

I have studied the life of George H. Brimhall, as have many others. His life, as all lives, had its elements of contrasts and contradictions. I am not an expert, and admit to some natural family prejudice, but I say without equivocation, I have received confirmation to my soul from the Spirit, that in total and on balance, God has accepted George H. Brimhall’s life as one of goodness and given him His smile of approbation!

To me, this poem by President Brimhall sums up his life:

The aim of man’s existence is
That he may have more joy
Than sorrow, in the sum of life—
Build rather than destroy:

To seek the truth, love man and God
And in his work be glad;
Be much more moved by love of good
Than by the fear of bad.

May we be much more moved by the good others accomplish than by the mistakes they make. God is, and we should follow Him.

I need no more assurance in my heart—but the words of President Heber J. Grant, the prophet of God, not long after Brother Brimhall’s death, are a great confirmation to my feelings: “His loyalty, ability and faith were given to the Church with all his heart and soul. George H. Brimhall was one of the choicest, finest, most spiritual minded, loyal, true men that I ever knew. That sums it all up.”

May we all be more loyal, faithful, able, visionary, and live lives of goodness—as President Brimhall did.

I am grateful that the Communications Department is housed here. With all of my heart I charge them to communicate the truths of the gospel to all of the world in every honorable way, not only outwardly, but inwardly, through the good lives of the faculty and students who go forth from here. I charge them to recognize that Thou art the greatest of all communicators and that Thy desire is for all people everywhere to hear and understand the Eternal Truths of the Gospel. I charge them to study, recommend, develop, and use various means, as Thou dost, to convey these truths. I charge them to study and understand how different people react to different modes of communication. I charge them to develop and use every honorable way and means, including those we presently do not understand, that will effectively communicate the truths of the Gospel to all the world.

I conclude with my testimony. God lives. He loves us. He sent us His son. Jesus is the Savior of the world. He is the Christ. He suffered willingly, even though there was a time when He wondered if there wasn't some other way. He suffered lovingly, because He loved us all, because He desired that the potential which is in all of us might flower and come to fruitage, and He knew that could not happen without the mercy that He could provide through His atoning sacrifice. I know He lives, I know He forgives, I know He loves. I know He gives light and life and hope and vision and help to all of us. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I know that President Hinckley is God's mouthpiece on the earth today. I know that the Book of Mormon is true. I know that this university is based on the desires and testimonies of the prophets and apostles, not only in our day and age, but in ages gone by and yet to come. They are all one. I pray that we may be one, and do so humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

If you will now fold your arms and bow your heads, we will rededicate the Brimhall Building.

DEDICATORY PRAYER

Our dear Father in Heaven, acting under the authority of the Board of Trustees, the Board of Education, and specifically under the keys that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds, I dedicate and rededicate this, the George H. Brimhall Building, unto Thee, to assist in the accomplishment of Thy purposes in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of Thy children. All of us here participate in this dedication, not only as family members in blood, but family members in faith and loyalty and ability and vision.

We pray that Thou wilt give us the strength of character that imbued the lives of our ancestors, that we will move forward in faith and desire to do good, and that we will build on the true vision of eternity, the vision of Zion, the pure in heart. We pray for those who occupy this building, as faculty, staff, students, and others. Help them to understand that of all the communicators in the world, Thou art the greatest, that Thou hast a great desire for the peoples of the world to hear the truths of the gospel, and that this can be done in many different ways, for different people react to different modes of communication. Please bless us with the ability to individually act as we should, live good lives, communicate in truth under the influence of Thy spirit, and with a desire to uplift and build and help, never to hurt or to bring down.

We thank Thee for the life of President Brimhall; we thank Thee for the life of Joseph Smith; we thank Thee for the life of President Hinckley. We thank Thee for the life of President Samuelson and for all of those who work with him in this great university. By the authority of the Priesthood, we rededicate this building, invoking all the blessings of the original dedication. We rededicate every person here to the commitment to do better, be better, and follow Thy will more fully. We thank Thee for the sacrifice of Thy Son, for His life of goodness. Help us all to follow Him and go about doing good. We do humbly and sincerely pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.